

# Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience

*Thank you for being a part of the Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience hosted by Hanover-Caroline Soil & Water Conservation District! We look forward to working with the teachers of Hanover and Caroline Counties to provide an exciting and educational outdoor experience for their sixth grade students.*

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## I. Who is Hanover-Caroline Soil & Water Conservation District?

Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) were established in the 1930s to develop conservation programs that conserve soil and water resources and promote proper stewardship. Today there are 47 Districts in Virginia, which cover 99% of the state. They are funded primarily by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), with additional support from the counties they represent. Districts partner with federal, state and local entities to provide technical assistance to land owners.



Originally a part of the Tidewater SWCD, Virginia's first District, Hanover-Caroline SWCD separated to form its own District in 1960. Since then, H-C SWCD has vastly expanded its programming to reach agricultural producers, suburban home owners and school children to education them on the importance of conservation of natural resources.

One of the major goals of the District is to administer the state Best Management Practice (BMP) Cost-Share Program. This program gives agricultural producers incentives to install conservation practices that will help protect soil and water quality. Additionally, H-C SWCD is a leader in the state in natural resource education, providing critical outreach to the public.

***Our mission:*** To provide and promote leadership in the conservation of natural resources through proper stewardship and educational programs.

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## II. What is a Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience?

The *Chesapeake 2000* agreement focuses on connecting individuals and groups to the Bay. It formally engages schools to undertake initiatives to help meet the Agreement. As a part of this goal, beginning with the class of 2005, every student must be provided a meaningful Bay or stream outdoor experience in the watershed prior to graduation from high school. According to the Chesapeake Bay Program, a **Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience (MWEE)** *“enables students to participate in hands-on environmental learning about the Chesapeake Bay watershed. This experience will serve as the foundation for a rich, lifelong relationship between students and their Bay. Throughout the MWEE process, students develop a sense of environmental ethics and stewardship that are essential to the long-term sustainability of the Chesapeake Bay.”* A MWEE has three phases: student research and discussion of watershed issues in preparation for the field component; students take action by observing and collecting data in an outdoor field experience; students return to the classroom to reflect and analyze. The MWEE should be sustained throughout the school year through classroom activities and additional environmental projects at the school and/or in the community.

*(source: Chesapeake Bay Program)*

### III. History of MWEE Development at Meadow Event Park?

The Hanover-Caroline Soil and Water Conservation District held a Strategic Planning Meeting in 2004, where several Hanover and Caroline County teachers were present. During this planning session, teachers indicated a need for the development of a MWEE for middle school students. After a visit to a MWEE event at Grand Caverns in Grottoes, Va., the District staff decided to develop a permanent field trip for middle school students, complete with various environmental learning stations. It happened that this came about around the same time that the State Fair of Virginia was making its move to The Meadow Event Park in Caroline County. The District began working with the State Fair staff and soon the MWEE found a home. The Meadow Event Park offers an ideal location for students to experience a variety of environments, including urban, riparian buffers, wetlands, and the North Anna River. After the site was selected, curriculum development began.

### IV. Field Trip and Classroom Curriculum

Each spring, Hanover County schools will come to the Meadow for field trips over four days. Caroline County students will participate in the fall. Each day 200 students will come for a morning field trip and a second group of 200 students will come for an afternoon field trip. Learning stations will be located on both the north and south sides of Route 30 at the Meadow. Each side of the road will host four groups of 25 students in a rotation of four 30-minute learning stations. Teachers will be responsible for splitting students into groups prior to the field trip and organizing buses to drop off student groups at the appropriate side of the road. Hanover-Caroline SWCD will provide color coded maps with rotation schedules for each group.

***The stations on the north side will include:***

1. Macroinvertebrates
2. Water Quality Testing
3. Riparian Buffer Study
4. Field Notes

***The station on the south side will include:***

1. Wetlands
2. Water Quality Testing
3. Parking Lot
4. Field Notes

At each station, students will be engaged in hands-on learning and investigation. Station instructors will include Hanover and Caroline County science teachers as well as natural resource professionals from agencies and organizations such as Department of Forestry, Department of Environmental Quality, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

***Questions? Contact the District:***

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***Thanks*** to lead MWEE teachers in Hanover and Caroline Counties:

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Ric Hertless, Chickahominy Middle School  
Becky Kazio, Oak Knoll Middle School  
Lynn Shope, Stonewall Jackson Middle School  
Carol Crabtree, Caroline Middle School  
Karen Fetty, Caroline Middle School  
Beth Hausler, Caroline Middle School